

TORAT HAR SHMUEL

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THE EVOLUTION OF TORAH

In memory of Eliyahu ben Yehuda, Dr. Elliot Hahn, Z'L
(Based on the Hashkafa of HaRav Shimon Kessin, SHLIT'A)

There is a foundational understanding within Judaism which teaches that the world cannot exist even for a moment without Torah. Conceptually, Torah existed two thousand generations prior to the creation of our world. The Midrash clearly expresses that Hashem gazed into the Torah and created our world, which means that it served as the architectural blueprint upon which the physical reality of this world was built. There is a very logical question that emanates from this concept. The Torah was given on Har Sinai in the Jewish year 2,448 B.C.E. Where was Torah until that time?

To understand the answer, we must go back Adam. The assumption many make is that Torah was never revealed until that momentous day we celebrate as Shavuot every year. The

fact is that "Torah" at every stage has been a complete work, evolving to meet the needs of mankind with a clear focus on the Children of Israel. The purpose of this work is to understand that progression from the beginning of time until the year 2,488 when our people entered the land of Israel under the leadership of Moshe's successor, Yehoshua.

For Adam and Chava, the entire Torah was comprised of one Mitzvah, not to eat from the tree of knowledge. To understand just how large this commandment was, we need to understand what was at stake here. What would have happened if Adam and Chava hearkened to the word of Hashem? Similarly, since we know they didn't listen, what, in fact were the consequences and how do they impact us today?

Adam was created with a predetermined goal in mind. Be humble and listen to Hashem and with the onset of the first Shabbat, his role as Mashiach ben Dovid would become a reality. Adam would have the opportunity to transform this world, our world, into Olom HaBah, the World to Come. This would be achieved via a process called "zichuch", purification. (The oil used in the Bais HaMikdash was called "shemen zayis zoch" – "pure olive oil". Zichuch is a derivative of the word zoch.) In simple terms, Adam's ability to perceive Hashem prior to sinning was like looking through translucent glass. It was neither opaque nor transparent but situated in the middle of those two extremes. With the onset of the first Shabbat, Adam would have acquired the ability to "polish the glass" enabling himself to perceive Hashem as much as any human being can. In this role, Adam was Mashiach ben Dovid. That is what would have been.

How do we understand Adam's reality, his existence on the sixth day, Erev Shabbat, prior to transgressing? Simply stated, the difference between pre-sin Adam and post-sin Adam is something all of us can relate to. When we look in the mirror, everyone sees their physical presence staring back at them. For Adam and Chava, when they gazed into the mirror prior to sinning, they saw their souls. In fact, their bodies were mere clothing to the souls that dominated their sense of self. Who they were was defined spiritually much more than physically. After they ate from the tree of knowledge, everything flipped into the reality we still have today. With the onset of the Geulah, hurriedly in our days, the process of soul over body will begin and eventually return to where it was with Adam and Chava prior to them sinning.

For Adam and Chava, the entire Torah was made up of one Mitzvah: Do not eat from the tree of knowledge. It was given to

them “B’Kedusha”, in holiness. There was no need for Tahara, purity to be associated with the Mitzvah because everything was already in a state of perfect purity until our founding couple sinned. Once they sinned and brought “zuhama” into the world, the need for purity was realized. Zuhama is the impurity that renders one incapable of seeing the unity between physicality and spirituality. One Messianic role devoted to Kedusha, transforming Olom HaZeh into Olom HaBah, morphs into an additional Messiah, Mashiach ben Yosef, dedicated to the Tahara process, cleansing the world of the zuhama Adam precipitated. We can understand the relationship between the two Messiahs by comparing them to an apartment. Simply stated, Mashiach ben Yosef comes in to clean the apartment after which Mashiach ben Dovid decorates it.

Therefore, for Adam and Chava, “Kol HaTorah kulo” was comprised of one Mitzvah, one Divine command. What is interesting to note is that the command was a negative one. The privilege of “world transformation” would have been a result of remaining passive – don’t eat from the forbidden tree. One would think that a privilege of this magnitude would be a consequence of some great active feat. It’s not!! We can speculate as to the reason. A concept found in Pirke Avot and throughout Jewish philosophy is in the grandiose nature of the battle between the “yetzer tov” and “yetzer hara”.

Adam and Chava sin and what was Torah in one Mitzvah becomes Torah in the form of the seven Mitzvos given to the seventy nations of the world. The opportunity for those nations remained the same as it was for Adam: Observe the seven Mitzvos and relate to Hashem Yisborach properly, and that nation would have the privilege of transforming Olom HaZeh into Olom HaBah. The proof that the opportunity still existed is in the reality that Avrohom Avinu succeeded. Not only was this privilege given to us through our father, but it was guaranteed to remain with us until the time for world transformation arrived. Furthermore, any nation that saw the authentic Divine light within Avrohom and Sarah could attach themselves as a nation to them and be a part of the world transformation process. This privilege remained the reality available to every nation until the Revelation at Har Sinai. No nation took advantage of the privilege and when we received the Torah on Har Sinai, the opportunity for a nation to join the ranks of Israel while retaining their national identity ceased. If a person wanted to come in, he or she could do so via conversion.

This reality sheds great light on a question many have

asked: Were Adam and Chava “Jewish”? If we look at the question from the perspective of “tafkeed”, the spiritual goals we are here to achieve while in a physically based world, the answer is yes!! The “tafkeed” of Adam was to transform Olom HaZeh into Olom HaBah. The “tafkeed” of the Jewish people, the children of Avrohom, Yitzchak and Yaakov remained the same: To transform Olom HaZeh into Olom HaBah. The watershed innovation the world experienced at Har Sinai was not the formal appearance of the Jewish nation, but the appearance of a newly defined Gentile world. For the first time, every nation except Israel is excluded from the world transformation process. From a “tafkeed” perspective, our role continues and remains the same as Adam’s. We therefore share this identity. As we are Jewish with a defined purpose, so too looking back we can say Adam was “Jewish”, having had the same divine purpose as we have had for millennia.

Many would think that Torah went from seven Mitzvos to “taryag”, the six hundred thirteen Mitzvos that mark the distinction of our people. This is not correct, as for an all too brief interlude, Torah Mitzvos went from seven in number to Ten in the first set of Luchos. The difference between the first and second Luchos is extraordinary. The first Luchos were carved from stone by Hashem Yisborach. Those Luchos were given as, “Torah b’tzuras HaKesser”, Torah in the form of a crown. What was the crown on the first set of Luchos that was lost because of the sin of the golden calf? Inherent in them were the “Nun Shaaray Bina”, the fifty gates of understanding. These provided a clarity whereby every commandment was thoroughly understood by all Klal Yisroel. Machlokes was not a factor. Every nuance, every detail regarding each commandment achieved a level of accurate clarity because it was accompanied with a heavenly based understanding that transcended the physical world in which we live.

What would have happened had the golden calf not been built and worshipped? Our Sages teach that the level of purity our ancestors reached while receiving the first Luchos resulted in “posku zuhamason”. The zuhama impurity and consequential death that entered the world at large because Adam and Chava ate from the tree of knowledge left the Children of Israel. Not only did they reestablish the purity Adam and Chava enjoyed before they sinned, death would no longer affect them as well. Moshe would have served in the role of Mashiach ben Yosef, leading Bnai Yisroel to the promised land with one stop on the way.

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They had to meet the nation of Moav to pick up Mashiach ben Dovid who was residing in their midst. From there, they would travel to the land of Israel and the Messianic Era, under the leadership of Moshe would begin.

Where would the first Bais HaMikdash be built. The entire nature of that structure would have been different than many would think because it would have been secondary to a greater “sanctuary”. The level of holiness our people reached would have made them worthy of personifying the verse (Shemos 25:8), that introduces the concept of a temple structure to us. “And make for Me a sanctuary that I may dwell in you”. The goal of the temple concept was not for Hashem, the Shechina to dwell in a building, but in each one of us. Indeed, this is what would have happened. Everyone would have become a “Mikdash m’at”, a personal Sanctuary in which they would sense the presence of Hashem. That sensation would have defined the uniqueness of every person, and simultaneously allow the entire Jewish nation to achieve a unity the likes of which we have never experienced. Every person would have been empowered to contribute their unique sense of holiness to a unified singularity, fitting together like a jigsaw puzzle where no two pieces are the same. The Achdus, the unity within Bnai Yisroel would have been so strong that the lines between the pieces of the puzzle would have been there, but barely visible.

Let’s digress for a moment so we can better understand our nation unified in the manner described above. There is a famous Gemara that explains that the reason Rabbi Akiva’s twenty-four thousand students died is because, “They didn’t accord respect one to the other”. This is a very difficult Gemara to understand because Rabbi Akiva was the paradigm mench exemplifying the verse (Vayikra 19:18), “Love your neighbor as yourself”. Are we to think that this Sage could not teach his students how to respect each other properly? To understand the Gemara, we need to look at it through Messianic eyes.

There are three times periods, tekufot, defining history in this world. The first two-thousand years were known as “tohu”, the second two-thousand years were known as “Torah” and the third two-thousand years (in which we are presently situated) are known as “Y’mos HaMashiach”. Rabbi Akiva was certain of the following. The second Bais HaMikdash was destroyed because of “sinas cheenom”, unbridled hate within our national ranks. Rabbi

Akiva knew he was the candidate of his generation to be Mashiach ben Yosef, and he thought that Bar Kochba was Mashiach ben Dovid. Rabbi Akiva believed that if he and his twenty-four thousand Messianic lieutenants could exemplify to perfection the verse quoted above, “Love your neighbor as yourself”, they could neutralize the “sinas cheenom” of their generation and usher in the Messianic era. The timing was perfect as they were entering the third “tekufa”, the historical period of Y’mos HaMashiach. He and his students mastered the “love your neighbor” part of the verse. That is the reality that although there are Jews from one end of the world to the next, we are all one family and should relate to each accordingly. This is the reason why any Jew traveling anywhere in the world can find a family to join in enjoying and observing a proper Shabbos. To this day, this is one of the hallmarks of our people.

Where Rabbi Akiva’s students found difficulty was in the last part of the verse, “Kmocha - as yourself”. This is an entirely different level of love. It recognizes that we are not just one family but one *organism*. Although the human body is comprised of many different organs, systems, we view it as one organism. Different parts of our bodies are comprised of different cellular structures, but despite their differences, they recognize each other. The brain knows the heart, the heart knows the stomach, the stomach knows the lungs, the lungs know the liver and so on. The blood running through our circulatory system is the vehicle through which this familiarity is achieved. There is a powerful proof for this. A person has been bed-ridden for years due to a failing heart. He’s been on the transplant list for a long time, and finally a heart is found that is a medical match for his body. He goes through the surgery, and shortly thereafter senses that with this new heart functioning properly, he has more energy than he’s had the last five years combined. What is the first thing his body tries to do? Reject the heart!! His body senses that it simply does not belong there – it is foreign. This metaphor represents the beginning of sinas cheenom and should be avoided at all cost. “Kmocha” means seeing each other within ourselves as one organism. I see you within me and hopefully you see me within yourself in a state of shared peace and growth. This level of Achdus, unity, could not be achieved by the students of Rabbi Akiva and resulted in the Geulah not coming to fruition in his

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days. When their role as lieutenants of the Mashiach was not achieved, they passed away, their life purpose having failed. We can look forward to achieving this level of unity when the Geulah occurs, hurriedly in our days.

Had we not worshipped the golden calf, we would have traveled to Israel via Moav, and ushered in the Messianic Era with Moshe Rabbeinu as Mashiach ben Yosef. Each of us would have experienced a spiritual Aliya resulting in becoming “miniature Holy Temples” with a central Bais HaMikdash to serve as a focal point around which the spiritual strength of our unified nation would have bonded with Hashem Yisborach. Our life guide, our Torah would have been “b’tzuras HaKeser”, perfectly understood and clear to each member of Klal Yisroel. We would have achieved the reality expressed in the concept that Israel, its Torah and Hashem Yisborach are unified. We would not have died because zuhama, the impurity that separates us from Hashem, left us at Har Sinai as part of Matan Torah and never returned. The joy of Geulah would have been our reality!!

The sad fact is that the golden calf was built and worshipped, costing us everything from the Geulah described above to a pristinely clear Torah. After Moshe Rabbeinu negotiated with Hashem for our forgiveness, a second set of Luchos, a second Torah different than the first is received. This was “Torah b’tzuras HaChochmo”. If the Nun Shaaray Bina were manifest in the first Luchos, they were buried deep in the second. In many ways, the second set of Luchos was different than the first. Why? When we sinned with the golden calf, zuhama returned as did the reality of death. The Geulah was put on a long hold as was the concept of us becoming individual “Botay Mikdash”. This is manifest in the Torah we have had since the year 2,448. We have instructions regarding the building of the Mishkan, a step down from the personal, internal Bais HaMikdash concept. Since death has returned, laws regarding tuma and tahara, ritual purity and impurity are now required. The various sin offerings described in the Torah speak to the decent in our status. Once again, the ordinary nature of our humanity is extant. When we speak of the evolution of “Torah” going from one Mitzvah given to Adam & Chava to seven Mitzvos given to the nations of the world, before we move to 613, we must consider the first Torah, founded on the Luchos with its ten and however many more Mitzvos given in the Torah b’tzuras HaKeser format contained. One point, though, is clear. The two sets of Luchos were very different because each ad-

ressed a very different Jewish nation and how they were to live their lives.

Why is this topic important during Chodesh Elul? The theme of this month, in preparation for Yom HaDin, is introspection, self-examination. We identify our successes with the hope of strengthening and adding to them in the coming year. We gaze, hopefully with honesty and intensity on our failures and determine how to implement permanent change so a year from now we can add this year’s failures to our list of successes as one of the temptations we have overcome. For this introspective process to achieve some sense of completion, we must look at another life category and determine if we are strengthening it properly. That category is the wellbeing of the Kehilla, our community. Within every community, the concept of Achdus has the potential to succeed or, G-d forbid, fail. “Echod”, one, unity has the same numerical value as “ahava”, love. I think what Hashem Yisborach is hinting at in this gematria is the fact that we are naturally predisposed to loving each other. As a nation, Hashem’s Chosen Nation, it defines who we are. If the potential to see each other within our self and ourselves within each other did not exist, Rebbi Akiva would not have called upon his students to strive for the “Kmocha” level of love and unity. To save the generation and bring the Geulah, they had to get to the summit of the mountain called “Achdus”. We should never condemn them as failures but applaud them for making the grand attempt they did. They almost got there!! We must ask ourselves if we are doing our share in the here and now to achieve what we can in unity. All of us have heard the famous words of the Chofetz Chaim: If sinas cheenom destroyed the second Bais HaMikdash, then Ahavas Cheenom will build the third one. This year, 5779, is the time to overlook our petty differences and realize that the greater good that will be achieved through our unity as Hashem’s Chosen Nation carries with it the strength to bring the Geulah, when all of us will be rewarded with the experience of achieving the universal relationship based on “Kmocha” unity.

**Wishing all of you the best of everything in the coming year:
Good health, happiness, success and most importantly, unlimited growth in Torah, Mitzvot & Ma’asim Tovim.**